

CHAPTER 4 Environmental Analysis

4.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE ANALYSIS

This Chapter contains a discussion of the possible environmental effects of the Beach and Edinger Corridors Specific Plan (proposed project) for the specific issue areas that were identified through the Initial Study process as having the potential to experience significant impacts. This Chapter is the primary component of the EIR, as it provides information on the project site's existing conditions, the type and magnitude of the project's potential individual and cumulative environmental impacts, and feasible mitigation measures that could reduce or avoid such impacts. The existing conditions component of the analysis defines the environmental conditions as they exist on and near the project site at the time the Notice of Preparation (NOP) was published, while project impacts are defined as the project's effect on the existing environment. Mitigation measures are designed to reduce a project's potential impact to less-than-significant levels. The purpose of this section is to inform readers of the type and magnitude of the project's environmental impacts and how such impacts would affect the existing environment.

A “significant effect” is defined by Section 15382 of the CEQA Guidelines as “a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project including land, air, water, or ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. An economic or social change by itself shall not be considered a significant effect on the environment, but may be considered in determining whether the physical change is significant.”

The assessment of each issue area begins with a discussion of the existing conditions (or setting), as well as a discussion of the regulatory framework relevant to that issue area. As required by the CEQA Guidelines, this document discusses any inconsistencies between the proposed project and applicable City of Huntington Beach General Plan policies and regional plans. However, consistent with the scope and purpose of this document, the discussion primarily focuses on those requirements adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect and an assessment of whether any inconsistency with these standards creates a significant physical impact on the environment. The ultimate determination of whether this project is consistent with the City's General Plan is a decision that resides exclusively with the decision-making body (i.e., the Planning Commission or City Council), not with this environmental document.

Following the setting is a discussion of the project's impacts relative to the issue area. Within the impact analysis, the first subsection identifies the methodologies used and the “Thresholds of Significance,” which are those criteria used to determine whether potential effects are significant. The next subsection programmatically describes each impact of the proposed project, code requirements and mitigation measures for significant impacts, and the level of significance after mitigation.

The City of Huntington Beach imposes standard code requirements (CRs) for the purpose of controlling or reducing potential environmental and/or safety issues associated with a proposed project. These CRs

may include, but are not necessarily limited to, development standards, infrastructure improvements, and/or operational requirements. In this EIR, standard CRs that are relevant to the environmental analysis are identified along with the discussion of mitigation measures in each resource-specific discussion provided in Chapter 3 (Project Description) of this document. CRs often have the effect of reducing an environmental impact, and as such, take the place of mitigation measures that would otherwise be required to address impacts. CRs identified in this document are not inclusive of all code requirements that would be imposed on the proposed project; only those CRs relevant to the environmental analysis are included.

The impact analysis concludes with a discussion of cumulative effects, which evaluates the impacts associated with the proposed project in conjunction with other past, present, and probable future development in areas causing related impacts.